"MINERVY,"

YULETIDE IN THE FAR NORTHWEST.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

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Written for The Evening Star. 'Minervy! Minervy! Yuh got them ca'ves over her face.

"Minervy! Minervy! Yuh got them ca'ves up"
"No'm—not yet."
"Well, clear out High time. It's time fer your paw to be back from town. I'd be ashamed. To go a-puttin' things off "shakes."

Over her face. She put up the bars with trembling hands and hastened home; little anumers were pounding away like mad in her temples. It was a full hour before the boat glided in to the Runt pler—which had been most fearfully and wonderfully fashioned out of "shakes." so, an' a-curlin' your hair to a crisp with a red-hot iron! Primp? My-O! What's the use in primpin' so? If Doug Hodges comes home with your paw to spend Christmas he'll be apt to find out your hair don't curt he'll be apt to find out your hair don't turi of itself. Mercy, child! Yuh didn't git a good curl on that one at the back o' your neck. Yuh might as well do't right while you're a-doin' it. I'd laff if I couldn't carl my hair evener 'n that, an' expectin' a beau to come an' spend Christmas! Take beau to come an' spend Christmas! Take an' give me them tongs."

Minerva handed her mother the curling iron with a sigh of mingled relief and exhaustion. She was a slim, sallow-complexioned girl, with large, irregular features. She had a little, weak stoop which made her shoulder blades stand out sharply. Her eyes, alone, were beautiful; they were large and brown, with golden glints in their velvet depths. They were wholly out of harmony with her sickly face and poor figure. Her mother gave ner head a sharp push and it dropped forward in limp obedience

ous tone with which she would have said, "So!" to a cow. "Bend the back of your neck out so's I can git the longs around The girl stretched her neck further, in a utile attempt to perform this impossible

on her long neck.

Teh, my, there! Don't stick your neck out that way or your head 'il roll off in cellar," exclaimed her mother, with a sga of impatience. "Yuh never can do httags like other girls. There's Lily Belle McNamara now-why can't yuh pattern af-ter her a little? Her hair 's always curled jest as pretty at the back o' her nead 's on the ronehead. She don't stick out her shoulder blades the way you do yours, neither. It makes a body feel offul to see your stooped over so! Lily Belle McNamara hours herself up like an arrer, everybody ooks when she goes up the aisle at meetin she always looks lest as neat as a new in pan, too. I see her once jest after she'd wel out a big redish-bed, an' My-O! She dign't have a speck o' dirt on her. Look-ee! there goes the minister, all primped up in his best, with his chin clean shaved! I bet a-goin' down to see the Widow Peters

Mrs. Bunt gave the iron a jerk, releasing a small, bobby curl on the back of Ma erva's bended neck. Two strides took her to the window. She pulled the green hade cautiously aside and peered out. Her sin wrinkled up around her narrowed

"Yes, sir-ee!" she announced, trium-darily, a moment later. "If he ain't, yuh may shoot me! Turned right down the Northeast Diagonal, as bold as brass, with-Northeast Diagonal, as bold as brass, with-out so much as lookin' around to see 'I' anybody see him. He must be pushed. His wife ain't dead a year—an' him with his chin shaved up that way! I bet the mourn-in' band's off o' his hat a'ready. I reckon that's where he's a-goin' to dinner tomor-row. I ast him here, an' he said he had an invite ahead o' me. She must of ast him invite ahead o' me. She must of ast him the minute he got back from his wife's fun'rai! I see her 'n the Rialty in Seattle, the other day, a-buyin' a lavender dress!" "I'd like to have a lavender dress," spoke up Minerva, suddenly, with a little quaver. "A-lavender-dress! For pity's sake! What do yuh want of a lavender dress, complected like you?" don't see why not."

'Yuh don't see why not, aigh? W'y, you'd look like sole-leather." by curl nestled beside the first on Minerwas neck. Presently she said and there was a break in her thin voice as of tears), What do you think I'd look best in then,

"W'y, I do' know. She reflected with thoughtful eyes. "Let's see." She burst out laughtful eyes. "Let's see." She burst out laughing suddenly in comfortable mirth. "If yuh want fax, Minervy, I do' know's there's any best to yuh. The Lord cidn't do overly much fer yuh in the way o' looks.

Lily Belle McNa-"I guess, if you're done curlin' up my hair, ma, I'll take an' get the cu'ves up." said Minerva. There was a hurt look on

'All right. It's high time. Wastin' your time so, a-curlin' your hair! Lily Belle-"
Minerva slipped out of the room and closed the door. She coughed as she went. The Bunt ranch was on one of the large islands of Puget sound. The boats cam up through a long blue arm that almost divided the island. It was a beautiful thing



"Bend the back of your neck out so's

smoke winding around the firred crests of the smaller islands, and later the glisten-ing curves of the boats themselves, as they came throbbing up the narrow water avenue, floored with blue and celled with blue and walled with somber green. Here and there rich fruit and vegetable farms sloped down to the water from their dark forest background. They were green with clover and full-sown wheat, although it

was the day before Christmis.

Minerva threw a shawl over her head to protect her new curls from the ravages of path to the pasture. There had been no heavy frosts yet, and the young brakes pushing the moist earth into little cones pushing the moist earth into little cones around them. The willows were hanging out their silver tassels; the wild eglantine

out their silver tassels; the wild eglantine was in leaf. In damp places the skunk cabbage had spread anew its broad leaves, from whose velvet depths would later on reach beautiful golden hands bearing pale, early torches in their hollowed palms. It was sunset, and all the little gally-clad running clouds were "jumping ropes" of many colors, which were being turned slowly by invisible hands across the west. Minerva stooped by a sheltered lank and plucked a handful of "spring beauties." "Poor, little pale things," she said. "They're come too early; the frost or the cold rain'll kill 'em sure." reach beautiful golden hands bear ng paie, early torches in their hollowed palms.

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"Poor, little pale things," she sail. "They're come too early; the frost or the cold rain." Il kill 'em sure."

She pinned them on her flat breast and went on. She let down the bars and the calves came leaping through from the pasture. She stood for a few moments looking down the blue arm with a zoft light in her eyes. Then a faint trail of smoke drifted slowly into view. She started from her "Tast night there were four Marys,

Tonight there'll be but three,

There was Mary Scaton and Mary Beaton, And Mary Carmichael—and me!"

"I wish she w'u'dn't sing that mournful somes, said her mother. "It makes somethin' come up in my win'pipe. She seems to lean to mournful songs—grave-yardy, I call 'em. She's turrable happy because yuh come to stay Christmas, Doug."

"Yes, it's so, You're the only thing she's ever had to be happy over. Been stuck here on this island ever sence she was knee high to a grasshopper. If anything happened to you, I guess it 'u'd kill herthere.

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"I wish she w'u'dn't sing that mournful thing so," said her mother. "I't makes of thing so," said her mother. "I't makes of the west. The will be sui

leaning posture and a rich glow burned

"shakes." Minerva was assisting in the preparation

of supper.
"Has he come with your pa?" asked her mother, entering the kitchen suddenly; for those two there was only one "he" on

"D'yuh want this here apple butter for "Yes, I want that apple butter for sup-

ries, i want that apple butter for sup-per-if he's come. Why don't choo look out an'see if he's come?"

"I can't," said poor Minerva, faintly.
"I'm so afraid he ain't come. You look,

"I'm so airaid he ain't come. You look, ma."

"If he ain't come," said Mrs. Bunt, derisively, setting herself broadly before the window, "I reckon yuh'li have the creepin' paralysis come on an' stay on till he does come. We'l, he's come. He's all fixed up. He's finer lookin' 'n ever. There ain't a young man on the sound got a better pair o' legs 'n nis'n," she added, with pride. "It's a wonder Lily Belle McNamara ain't set her cap at him, seein's he's been teachin' school so clost to her pa's. Not that it 'u'd do her any good. He never'd dare throw off on yuh, after his mother an' me fixed it all up of ourselves."

"Well, I'd dare—if he wanted Lily Belle McNamara, or Lily Belle anything else."

said Minerva, with a quick, unexpected sald Minerva, wi flash in her eyes. Minerva, with a quick, unexpected

"Hunh. Most time yuh was a-settlin' down, ain't it?"
Young Hodges swallowed before he spoke. He was very pale. He took up the poker and commenced stirring the red roals.
"I expect so."

"I expect so."
"Yuh've been engaged to Minervy now slose onto four year."
There was no reply.
"Ain't yuh?"

"Yes'm."
"Well, why don't yuh settle down?" Per-

spiration began to bead upon his brow. He realized that the awful ordeal, the mere anticipation of which has given sleepless nights to more than one young man, was upon him. He was being asked his "intentions."

"I do know" he said belonged to the control of th "I do' know," he said, helplessly. "I do' know just why I don't, Mis' Bunt." "Well, yuh'd best think about it. Why don't yuh live on your ranch instid o' gad-din' to the other side o' the island to teach

"May bees don't fly 'n December. "Maybe I would."
"May bees don't fly 'n December. "How's Lily Belle McNamara.""
"She's well."

He punched the fire till the sparks sputered up the chimney in a scarlet cloud.
"Hunh." 'She she she's a-comin' over here tomorrow.

"Over where?"
"Over here." "Here? Here? To our house?" "Ye os'm."
"What's she comin' here for?"

"To spend Christmas, I s'pose."
"People don't go places to spend Christmas without an invite." There was an awful sternness in Mrs. Bunt's voice.
"Well, I—I give her an invite."

"Yuh did! Yuh ast her to come here to spend Christmas? What made yuh?" "I thought maybe you'd like to have

"Yuh thought maybe I'd like to have her, hunh?" Mrs. Bunt's tone was withering.
"Well, when I want anybody, I've got
enough gum'tion to ask 'em of myself. I
ain't anybody's skim-milk—an' my girl
ain't neither"

The door was opened hesitatingly and Minerva entered. Minerva entered.
"I guess I'm all through, ma."
"Well." Mrs. Bunt got up slowly. "Go
back an' put a stick o' wood in the stove."
As the door closed she fronted the miserable-faced young man again.

"Seein's yuh can't screw up courage to set the day, Doug," she said, with cheerful affability, "I'll help yuh out. We'll call it the first day o' May; an' if yuh don't walk up to the church with Minervy on that day, I'll take that big ranch o' your'n for breach o' promise" for breach o' promise."

Minerva came in again, and Mrs. Bunt

retired with a parting injunction, "Don't set up later'n 12, yuh gooseheads, you!" Miss Lily Belle McNamara arrived on the noon boat. Young Hodges went down to meet her. Minerva and her mother stood at the window watching them climb the hill.



SHE SANK DOWN UPON A ROCK AND TURNED HER FACE DOWN THE ARM

"Yuh needn't to explode so. They're right here 't the house. All is," she added, with a stern look as she went to the door, "I sh'u'd jest like to see him try to throw off on yuh. I'd show him pretty quick that he c'u'dn't come it." She opened the Love an' Goshen! Yuh come, did yuh? It's a cure for sore eyes to see yuh, Doug Hodges. Come right in. Never mind your feet. Whose trunk was that come in on the boat with yuh?"

"I say, whose trunk was that come in on the boat with yuh? Yuh gone deef?" "Trunk? I do' know."

"Well, come in. Here's Minervy, awaitin" o see yuh.' Minerva came forward, scarlet-faced, and shook hands limply. Her hand was like a bird's claw. young man's face reflected the scar-

"Well, Minervy," he said, "you gettin"

"Yes, sir," said Minerva, with quivering politeness. He sat down and slid his chair to the winlow with a squeak. "It's a-goin' to be a nice Christmas."

"It is so. "It's lots warmer'n usual."

"Yes-it is so." There was a beautiful happiness now on Minerva's face, which had been so pale and anxious about the time the boat landed; but it was a happiness that had something

The young man did not seem to be overburdened with joy. He looked embarrassed and ill at ease. His weak blue eyes shifted away from Mrs. Bunt's steady, asking

Finally she said, dryly, as she took a sip of the boiling gravy to test its seasoning 'What's the matter of yuh, Doug?"

He gave a jump.
"Matter? Nothin'. Why?" "Yuh look so! Been teachin' school over to McNamara's, ain't choo?' "Yes'm." The red came back to his face "Hunh."

There was a silence. Minerva was stepping around spryiy. Now and then she looked at him with shining eyes. The little curls were bobbing coquettishly on the back of her neck and on her brow. The re-mainder of her hair was twisted into a tight wisp. She were a dull green, badly fitting dress, with funny bows of ribbon sewed over it. Once the young man gave her a long, searching look; then, without the slightest change of countenance, he turned his eyes toward the boat just draw-

ng away from the pier.

Mrs. Bent poured the gravy into a bowl, scraping the pan dexterously with a tin "Yuh knew Lily Belle?"

The young fellow cleared his throat. "Supper's all ready. Set up. Pa! Oh, pa! Why don't cheo come to supper? I don't see where that trunk's a-goin' to Minervy, is it still a-settin' down there

Minerva eraned her long neck.

Yes'm. Mrs. Bunt sighed helplessly. "It beats me. Well, set up before everything gets cold. Oh, my land! I bet it's the Widow Peters' noo outfit! It just struck me all of a sudden."
"I hear yesterday that her 'n the miniter was a-goin' to git married," said Mr.

"I bet." After supper Mr. Bunt went out to the barn to "fodder" the cattle. The guest arose to accompany him, but Mrs. Bunt pointed with a large, crooked finger to the sitting room. "You go in an' set down.
I'll come in an' talk to yuh while Minervy

close to him.

There was a clatter of dishes. Minerva

lifted up her weak, cracked voice and commenced to sing:
"Last night there were four Marys,

"She's got a noo hat." announced Mrs. Bunt, grimly.

"Well, I wish yuh held your head up the got it in Seattle. Minerva's face. "She's got on a noo dress, too. I'll be switched if it ain't got velvet panels up the sides! There—lookee! what a straight, up an' down back she's got—no wonder she looks stylish." She turned and gave a dissatisfied look at Minerva's shoulders. "Why can't choo hold yourself

nerva, with a sigh that had no malice. There was sufficient woman in her to envy the ankles for more than the straight, up

"It's hot work climbin' the hill," said her

and happiness, and Doug Hodges stood looking down upon her, gloating over her beauty.
As he so stood, Minerva's eyes went to

his face and dwelt there—at first with gentlest love, only; but later, with some-thing else that sent the blood away from

Lily Bell cast a glance at Minerva's old low-backed organ as she passed. "Oh, Minervy, con you play the 'Prize Banner Quickstep?" 'No; I wish I c'u'd."

"No: I wish I c'u'd."

"Well, I can—I've just learned it."

"Minervy can play 'Angel Voices in the Night,'" announced Mrs. Bunt, proud as any peacock. "It's lots harder'n 'The Prize Banner.' It's full of little grace notes. Yuh can't play it, can yuh?"

"Oh, yes," said Lily Bell, pleasantly; "I

menced to play something light and merry. She played with spirit and grace, making the old instrument turn out jigs and hornpipes far peneath its dignity. Doug Hodges stood with his arms folded, observing her intently. Minerva stood with her back to the window; her eyes never moved from his face. She was very pale. She breathed slowly and noiselessly; her lips were parted. Mrs. Bunt watched all three, im-

at 3 o'clock. There was a thick soup, made of canned oysters, with little rings of but-

Bunt.

"Well, I guess they'd like to be alone a lectle while—on Christmas, too."
"We'd just as soon have her along of us," spoke up the young man, boldly, with a red face.
"Well, she'll set here with me. That's settled. Yuh'n Minervy go on now. I'd laft if I'd have anybody tag me an' my girl around all day, if I was a young man."
"Why, the idee!" fluttered Lily Belle.
"Well, I w'u'd. I'd laft." She passed near Minerva. "The day's all set," she said, in a stern whisper. "Has he told yuh? It's the first day of May."
"The girl's large eyes glowed out of her

"It's offul pretty; got ourple grapes on t. They're the latest style. She must of

up? Stand an' stoop! She wears her dress-es mighty short."

"She's got pretty ankles," said poor Miand down back.

She went to the door slowly.

"That choo, Lily Belle?" she said, with a struggle to be cordial. "I'm reel glad yuh come. Why, Doug, you're offul red in the come. Why, Doug, you're offul red face—I never see you so red before.' mother, drily.

"It is so," said Lily Belle, gaily. "I'm ready to drop—so I guess I will." She sunk, laughing, upon a chair. "My, I forgot to say 'Merry Christmas!"

She sat in a beautiful glow of health

her plain face.

"Well, don't set in the kitching," said
Mrs. Bunt. "There's a fire 'n the settin'
room. Step right in."

could play it three year ago."
She sat down at the organ and com-

partially. Suddenly Minerva commenced coughing. Doug Hodges gave her a frowning look—one that asked, with the impatience of a tenthat asked, with the impatence of a temperature of a temperature of the put her hand on her chest, and, still cough-

put her hand on her chest, and, sun cougn-ing, slipped out of the room. Her mother gloomed after her for a mo-ment; then she arose and followed her. The Christmas dinner was eaten solemnly of canned cysters, with little rings of butter floating on top; there were two big
reasted chickens with sage dressing; a
deme of mashed potatoes with a pool of
melted butter in its sunken crater; stewed
pumpkin, stewed corn, pickled peaches and
beans, brown gravy, mince ple and floating
island and crabapple jelly—all trembling
and glowing upon the table at the same
time.

Minerva served her guests faithfully, but she atc little herself. when the dishes had been washed and the floor swept, Mrs. Bunt stood the broom up stiffly behind the kitchen door, while Minerva hung the dishpan out on the porch and stretched the dishcloth smoothly over

"Now, Lily Belle," said Mrs. Bunt, firmly pulling down her sleeves, "we'll go in the settin' room; Doug an' Minervy's a-goin' to "I'd just as soon go along with 'em, Mis'

"Well, I guess they'd like to be alone a

"The girl's large eyes glowed out of her

The sunset was drawing its long beautiful ribbons out of the beryl skies and colling them so low in the west in splendid hoops of color. A strong wind was blowing up the arm; the waves pounded and broke upon the rocks.

Minerva walked silently by her lover's side. Once she shivered and drew her cape closer about her chest. Several times she upon the rocks.

young man, at last, indifferently.

"No, only a cough."

He looked at her. "You've got thinner 'n when I was here last."

"It's been six backba." Her volce round. "It's been six months." Her voice sound-d hollow. There was a drawn look about "It has? So long? Why, it didn't seem nore'n a month.'

"You've got a cold, ain't choo?" said the

He began to walk more slowly, and she fell into his pace unconsciously, like an obedient dog.
"It seems like six years to me." The
words ought to have shaken his soul—there was such a heartbreak in them.

"It all depends on the way you spend your time, I s'pose," he said. A smile came upon his mouth; his eyes smiled toe—as in memory of something sweet.

The girl saw. Her breath came with a

memory of something sweet.

The girl saw. Her breath came with a sound that was almost a sob. She stopped suddenly and faced him. All her passion, all her heartbreak, tall her despair broke loose in that second and shook her so that she could not speak. But her eyes spoke. Presently she got control, too, of her voice—poor, shaken thing that it was.

"Why don't yuh speak up?" she said, fiercely. "Why don't yuh speak up?" she said, fiercely. "Why don't yuh speak up?" "He stared at her stupidly, the smile slowly leaving his face.

"That you're tired o'—o' bein' engaged to me." The words must have hurt. She pressed both hands hard upon her throat and coughed. "Why don't yuh tell me that yuh want her."

He had the menhood to guell and tale.

and coughed. "Why don't yuh tell me that yuh want her."

He had the manhood to quall—and to insult her by no lie.

But before he could speak her passion had burned itself out. Her face worked strongly and tears leaped to her eyes, stinging. "Oh, Doug, Doug," she said, gently; "I w'u'dn't of had yuh for long anyhow. Then yuh c'u'd of had her, an' I'd of been happy a little while first. It w'u'dn't of been more'n a year—an' she's so well an' pretty, she c'u'd of waited. But it's all right. Yuh go an' have her, an don't worry about me. I guess the worst part of worry about me. I guess the worst part of it's over now. One thing, dyin won't be ha'f so hard." She sank down upon a rock and turned her face down the arm—not blue now, but dull gray, I'ke the sky from which all color was gone. "Yuh go on in an' tell her. I guess I'll stay out here a He stood still.

"Your-that is-your ma-"
"Oh!" she said, quickly. A quiver went across her face. "I forgot her. Oh, poor ma!" She arose and stood irresolute. Then she said, slowly—'It'll go in with yuh. We won't let her know till you'n Lily Belie are gone. Then I'll tell her myself.' -she-

"She—she—"
"It'll be all right," she assured him, patiently. "She don't cross me in anything—since I got to coughin' so."

He turned back then, with his head up and a glow on his face—the happlest coward that ever breathed God's air. She went swaying along beside him. The wind tore her cape from her chest. She coughed often. Her face was as blenk as the sea; but her soul shone like a steadfast star out of her beautiful eyes.

(The End.)

A TOMATO HEART.

A Cincinnatian Affleted 12h a Peculine Disease From the Cincinnati Enquirer.

Epicures especially and the public in general should be warned by the fate of Paul D. Warner, who was yesterday discharged from the City Hospital, not because he was entirely cured, but because, afflicted with two diseases, he decided to seek a different climate, beneficial to the more fatal of the two. When admitted to the institution several months ago Warner, while showing symptoms of consumption, was also suffering from a peculiar heart affliction, which after repeated examinations by the attending physicians, was pronounced to be lycopersicum cardiopathia, or tomato heart. Curious as it may seem, the man's debili-tated condition and the weakness of that important organ was due to the patient's love for that luscions vegetable, which he ate at every meal. It was not until the beginning of the civil war that the acceptance of the tomato as an edible become ance of the tomato as an edible became general, and Europe, up to the present time, has not given it a welcome. Analysists have placed it among the vegetables sisting of over 85 per cent water, and its an acid called by some acidum lycopersi-cum, and by others as acetic and mailic in combination. Scientists have long ago dis covered, however, that to some persons the cmato is a veritable poison. In some case: the symptoms develop immediately and are alarming, and in others the results are cumulative. In the latter, as in the case of Warner, an abnormal hypersensitiveness of the heart and circulatory apparatus is discovered. First, a simple heart irritability with a latent inflammation, is observed then an inflammation of the inner wall especially about the oartic ly about the oartic roots and The heart passes out of the condivalves. The heart passes out of the condi-tion of equilibrium into a habit of irregu larity and inequality of rhythm and force. Difficult breathing supervenes and limits

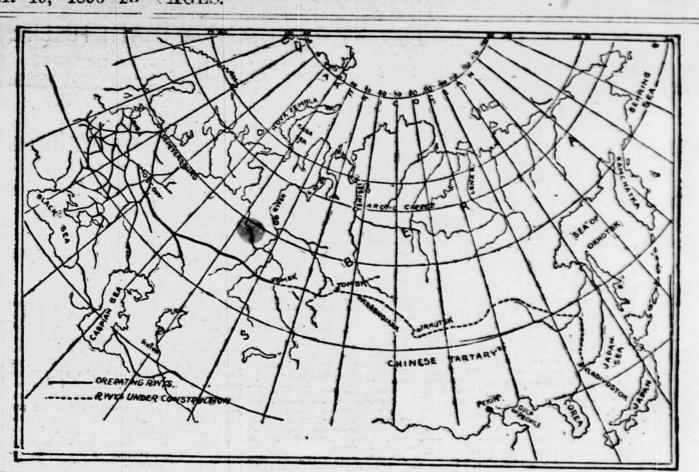
When first admitted, Warner exhibited all the symptoms of acute poisoning, and for a while his case baffled the skill of the attending physicians. Only when his in-ordinate fondness for the fruit was discovered was a diagnosis made possible. He suffered pain and gastric uneasiness, succeeded by choking, belchings and hearthur and vomiting. Then came an arrest of the vital activity within the chest, and the poor patient suffered as much mentally as physically, a peculiar action of the disease being that it impresses itself upon the mind, cre ating depression and gloomy premonitions. Cold sweats appeared upon his forehead, being produced by heart fright. Headaches and a tension about the temples be-came manifest, accompanied by languor. At times also Warner's speech became im-peded, and he found it difficult to articulate, followed by an incoherence of thought, sev-eral ideas seeming to seek eral ideas seeming to seek expression at the same time. He also experienced numbness of the fingers and tongue, and general perversion of the senses. During Warner's stay at the hospital he was treated freely with acetanilid and alcohol in equal proportions, and while improving under this treatment he was by no means cured when he was discharged. This was only done, he was discharged. This was only done, however, at the earnest solicitation of the patient himself, as he was afflicted with consumption, as before stated, and desired to go to a different climate for relief from this disease, the more dangerous of the two.

Breaking the News Gently. From the Chicago Post.

The doctor came into the room rubbing his hands and smiling. "Everything all right?" asked the mar who was anxiously waiting for him. "Couldn't be better," returned the doctor

"Good," said the man with a sigh of re-lief. Then, when he saw that the doctor intended to say nothing more, he asked, with some hesitation: "Er-ah-boy or The doctor stopped rubbing his hands and looked a trifle uneasy, as if the task be-fore him were not just to his liking. "Well." he said at last, "you'll need a tandem wheel for it."





TRANS-ASIATIC LINE

Progress in the Construction of the Great Siberian Railway.

STRATEGIC AND COMMERCIAL

Railroad Between St. Petersburg and Yenesei Nearly Completed.

ROAD IN CHINA

Written for The Evening Star.

At the time of my recent visit to Siberia (August, 1896) the Trans-Siberian railway was open to general traffic as far as the Ob river, a distance of 882 miles from Cheliabinsk, the terminus of the European railway system at the eastern base of the Urals, and 386 miles beyond the Siberian city of Omsk. The formal opening of the division between the Ob river and Krasuoyarsk, which Prince Hillkoff informs me will take place at the end of the present year, will at last establish a complete rail communication of about 3,000 miles between St. Petersburg and the greatest of the Siberian waterways -the Yenesei river. Of the three large bridges which were to be constructed along the line up to this point, the one across the Irtish has already been built and in use for over a year, while those across the Ob itself and its eastern branches are expected to be completed by the end of 1897. The building of the great bridge across the Yenesel, the largest along the line, was formally commenced September 1 of the

present year. Over the steppe and undulating country which lies between the Urals and the Yenesel river the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway has been comparatively easy and inexpensive (I am informed about \$15,-00) per mile); but the mountainous regions from Krasuoyarsk to Irkutsk, and from Lake Baikal to the Amoor river, where separate sections of the line are now in the course of construction, require much more engineering skill and pecuniary outlay. It is expected that the former section between Krasuoyarsk and Irkutsk, the east Siberian capital, will be completed by the end of 1897.

Commercial Development.

I cannot share in the general opinion that the Trans-Siberian railway was designed chiefly for strategical purposes. It is quite true that the completion of this transcontinental highway will enable Russia at very short notice to fill up the weak gaps along her sparsely settled Chinese flank. and at the same time to open up an avenue for the ready transport of troops to the Pacific littoral, thereby greatly augmenting her influence in eastern waters. Nevertheless the commercial development of Siberia, which, with every encouragement from the government, is following rapidly in the wake of this opening enterprise, seems tome to have been the paramount object in the minds of its originators. The emperor himself, who is president of the board of directors for the Trans-Si-

berian railway, is taking the liveliest per-sonal interest in the matter of Siberian im-migration. This is one of the first uses to which the railway is being put, and in con-sequence over 400,000 immigrants were transported last year at the nominal rate of one mill per mile. The governors of the various provinces have been instructed to defer other duties in order to attend to the distribution of free land and timber, prom ed to the immigrants, many of whom have been obliged to return to European Russia through the inability of the officials to cope in time with the overwhelming tide

of applications. New towns are springing up all along the line, and the populations of the old ones rapidly increasing, especially in the trad-ing quarters. Novo Nicholaevsk, which now lies at the junction of the Trans-Siberian railway and the Ob river system, one of the most advantageous commercial positions along the route, has sprung up, like a mushroom, in the very heart of the wilderness, and today it is impossible to buy a piece of land there within one mile radius of the station house.

Facilitating Intercourse. The teeming valleys of the southern Ob

and Yeresel rivers are already being tapped to supply the untilled steppe lands of western Siberia on the one hand and the untillable mountainous districts of eastern Siberia on the other, thus giving full play to the natural laws of compensation. Not five years ago, during the bread famine in east-ern Siberia, when wheat in Irkutsk was selling for \$1.50 per pound, it could be bought in Bernaul, in the Ob valley, for bought in Bernaul, in the Ob valley, for about eight cents. To correct such internal defects as this, as well as develop the la-tent resources of the country, is, in my opinion, the chief purpose of the Trans-Siperian railway.

berian railway.

Like the Trans-Caspian line to Samarcand, the Trans-Siberian railway was decided upon with very little preliminary discussion or investigation. Alexander III simply wrote: "Let there be a line" and cussion or investigation. Alexander III simply wrote: "Let there be a line" and a line there is, every day more rapidly approaching to completion. There is hardly a doubt that the impulse to construct the Trans-Siberian line was largely derived from the successful completion of the Canadian Pacific railway, and its subsequent development of the British North American possessions; for in many respects Siberia is to Russia what Canada is to England—a great landed heritage, full of magnificent resources, only waiting to be developed.

The present development of Russian railway enterprise is one of the most signifi-cant features of the day, and is a direct outcome of the French rapprochment. French loans are now providing the sine ws of war for a recrudescence of Russian activity in Asia, aimed, of course, at England's commercial prospects in the east. The progress of the Trans-Siberian ratiway, however, is the point that excites chief interest, especially as the marked attention paid to Li Hung Chang during the recent visit to St. Petersburg clearly. his recent visit to St. Petersburg clearly demonstrates that the route will lie via the open country and easy gradients which Manchuria can boast.

The bistory of the development of the Trans-Siberian railway is in itself an admirable example of the good luck that seems never to tire of favoring Russia in all her eastern projects. When the pre-

Change of Plan.

prepared the most sanguine Russian Lever dreamed that the fortunes of war, which were to cost his country nothing, would place the most influential Chinese statesman in its power, increased facilities being thus given for the opening up of the shortest possible main route between Europe and the Pacific, between St. Petersburg and Pekin.

The original plan for a Trans Siberia.

"So? Of course it's so! Now, just lock

Pekin.

The original plan for a Trans-Siberian railway was to follow the circuitous valley of the Amoor and its Ussurri affluent to the southern-most Siberian port-Vladivostock, and with this object in view the Ussurri section as far as Khabarvoka has already been constructed inward from the Pacific to meet the section building castward from LakeBaikal; but now all this is secret that arrangements were made through Li Hung Chang during his recent visit to St. Petersburg by which Russia is privileged to make use of the open country of Manchuria instead of the mountainous region of the Amoor. From Nerchinsk the proposed terminus of the Trans-Baikal section, at the headwaters of the Amoor.

"That's so," mused Belton.

"So? Of course it's so! Now, just look at the dangers which I face every day. There's nine miles in a suburban train, which makes thirty miles an hour between some stations, and then there's nine miles hack at night, over frogs, crossings, switches and all the wilderness of iron rails and ties. One open switch might get me an audience with the coroner before I to the station I cross under two overhead trolley wires, and in front of both cable and trolley cars. I get onto the opposite side walk and have to walk under the wall seed walk and have to walk under the wall seed walk and have to walk under the wall seed walk and have to walk under the wall seed walk and have to walk under the wall seed walk and have to walk under the wall seed walk and have to walk under the wall seed walk and have to walk under the wall with might bust my upper crust. "I cross two more cable car tracks ness." section, at the headwaters of the Amoor river, the line will turn southeastward along the valley of the Sungari as far as the March ries of the Sungari as far as the Manchurian capital, Kirin, whence it is ostensibly proposed to strike due east to Valdivostcek.

For the Future.

It is generally understood, however, that when the vantage point of the Manchurfa capital has been reached without exciting the apprehension or jealousy of the powers, no ice-bound terminus, such as Viadivostock would afford, will then be selected, but a suitable port on the Gulf of Pechilli. I know, in fact, from personal acquaintance that Russian surveys are already being made with a view of projecting a private rallway from Kirin surthward to private rallway from Kirin southward to connect the Trans-Siberian through line with the only railway in China now operating northward from Tientsin. Should it subsequently prove to Russia's advantage this "purely private" enterprise could at any time be incorporated in the Trans-Siberian system. It requires no special perspicacity to surmise that this is really the ultimate intention. ultimate intention. At first Port Arthur was spoken of as the

most likely spot to be favored as the Pe-chili terminus of the Trans-Siberian railway, but the latest move rather points to the ultimate selection of Chifu, which, as the ultimate selection of Chifu, which, as is well known, possesses many valuable attractions, climatic and otherwise. A giance at the map will prove that to reach Chifu the railway will have to make a circuitcus sweep, following in great part the route of the present Chinese railway, and taking in Peking and Tientsin on its way. It is not difficult to fagrage what this way. It is not difficult to foresee what this will mean. Sooner or later the line will tap practically the whole of the overland trade of the Chinese empire and enormously consolidate Russian influence to the exclusion of the others on the Pacific littoral.

According to a remarkable article article.

ing to a remarkable article recent ly published in the inspired columns of the Novoe Vremya, the martial Eden that the Novoe Vremya, the martial Eden that to fulfill all the strategical qualities that Russia demands is the unoccupied port of Mokpo, situated on the shores of the Yelow sea, near the mouth of the Yang-San-Kang, a river of large volume in latitude

Kang, a 1182. 34 degrees 47 minutes. THOMAS G. ALLEN, Jr. In Chicago-Dangers Past and Present

From the Chicago Record. "Say, these old settlers make me tired." Smiley Williams looked it, too. "What's the natter now?" asked his

chum, with a sigh of resignation, "Oh, it's this tommy rot about the hardships of the pioneers, who are pictured as blazing the path for civilization.' What the blazes did they Go? I face more dangers every day in Chicago than any of those long-legged old chumps who used to wade in the marshes around Fort Dearborn in the '30s."

Bolton gave a long, low whistle. Then, bracing his feet against the steam radiator, he lerned back and sighed: "What a whopper."

"It is the gospel truth," asserted Smiley. doggedly. "Of course, you are awfully afraid of In-

dian bullets, bears, snake bites and such, returned Bolton, ironically. "Fudge," contemptuously; "who the dickens would be afraid of an old flint-lock From London Truth. musket in the hands of a squint-eyed, pigeon-toed Indian? It is only as we get away from such scenes that we grow creepy up and down the spinal column. I simply insist that I risk more dangers every day that I go down town than a whole garrison in those days braved in a

week. I'll tell you just how it is.
"Away back in the '30s old Fort Dearborn was considered stronger than most free lunch cheeses of today. An Indian wouldn't think of trying to batter it down. So just as long as those fellows staved inside they were safe. They stayed there, too, for there wasn't anything else to do

for the most part.

"You talk about Indians, but you must remember that an Indian couldn't get in a good position to plug a settler without getting more or less into a position to be plugged himself, and I tell you an Indian always took presions, good care of himself. always took precious good care of his hide. He always used the warwhoop for his health and he knew enough to before he got hoarse—which is more than a whole lot of politicians know. "As to wild animals, they never attacked a man who wasn't hunting 'em; you might as well say that I'm in danger of being

shot by Gen. Weyler, because there's a war in Cuba.
"No, this talk about our forefathers who went ahead and prepared the wilderness for us makes me sick. Suppose some old

of which might bust my upper crust.
"I cross two more cable car tracks, pass another new building with loose bricks on

top, and dive between trucks and drays and cabs to the office. I ride fourteen stories up in an elevator which has fallen twice already, and there I am ready to work all day over a great battery of boilers which may blow me to kingdom come at any menute. All this, too, under the most favorable circumstances and without naming a host of other possibilities. "For instance, I pass four saloons where pizen mean whisky is sold. How do t know that some drunken fool won't stag-

ger out with a revolver in each hand raking the street with bullets?

"Suppose a policeman chooses to shoot at a pickpocket who is running in my di-"Suppose a horse runs away and catches me on a crossing?
"Suppose a sign blows off the third-story front of some building just as I get under

"Look how it was here in the great rail

road strike. Look how it is every Fourth of July, with bullets and rockets and cannon firecrackers on all sides. And just think how much I am menaced every night by thugs, fcctpads, burglars and the long list of plug-uglies of every description which enable the police to draw salaries." Smiley had paused so plainly for a reply that Bolton gave in.
"Yes," he assented, guarcedly.
"But that isn't all," chuckled Smiley,

gleefully. "Good heavens," exclaimed Bolton, "are "Good heavens," exciaimed Bolton, "are you working a life or accident insurance scheme on me?"

"You know I'm not."

"Well, go on," resignedly.

"What I was going to say," said Smiley, Impressively, "is that Chicago drinking

water has killed more people than were

Bolton has been drunk ever since!

From the New York Hetald. "I'm tired of 'running around' with you," said the bicycle. "The first thing you do when you take me out is 'pump' me, and when you've done that to your satisfaction you don't do a thing but 'jump' on me. Now, I don't mind your 'setting' on me at every opportunity, but you fly off the 'handle' every time I make a bad 'break,' and if I lose my 'bearings,' off you are likely to go again. There is something of a 'crank' about me, I admit, but you should not charge me with being 'rattled' simply because I am a little 'loose in the head, and speak of me as a 'rat trap.' I 'spoke of all this before, and you simply stroked ny side with a match are made light of it. But I don't intend that you shall 'blow me vp' again. Of the two, you are much the 'heavier,' but I am the 'faster,' and some day when I see the 'coast' clear I will try

to 'get away' from you. "Were it not for me you would not hold your 'head' up so 'high,' anyway, so you are not the fellow to be 'scorching' me. while I have the true 'ring' about me and am made of the right sort of 'metal.

It Was Patti.

A lady passenger in a Great Western train was much disturbed in her attempts at a nap by some one singing in the next compartment, so she asked the guard to interfere. That official did so, and got laughed at for his pains, and the singing went on. At the next station the lady sent for the station master, and requested him to succeed where the guard had failed. The station master went to the next compartment, and immediately returned to apologize. "I am very sorry, madam," he said, "but I really cannot ask your neigh-bor to stop singing. She is Mme. Patti."

. From Her Standpoint.

From Life. Lady-"But it seems to me you ask very high wages, when you acknowledge that you haven't had much experience. Bridget-"Shure, marm, ain't it harder for me when I don't know how?"

Clara-"He says that you have been twice as nice as you usually are."

Maude—'Yes. I was afraid he would try' to break off the engagement before Christ-

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